The Priesthood *of* Believers

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The Priesthood *of* Believers

In its Relation to Inner Mission Work or Christian Social Service

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The Priesthood of Believers

In Its Relation to Inner Mission Work or Christian Social Service

I.

The Doctrine.

This grows out of and is based on the Priesthood of Christ Jesus. The Priesthood of Christ was a completion and fulfilment of the Priesthood of the Old Testament. Besides many other Scripture passages we have all this brought out and explained in the Epistle to the Hebrews.

Man had broken God's law. For this God was angry, as He is indeed angry with the impenitent, wilful sinner every day. By his sin man had barred himself out from the presence of God. He could no longer approach God. Left to himself man would have been separated from God forever. Man could never have bridged the gulf of separation. Man would have been eternally a lost and condemned creature.

But God provided a way of escape, a way of salvation. Man could not and would not approach God. But God approached man. He called him and promised him a Redeemer.

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He began a long and patient training of mankind for redemption. Man had to learn how needy and helpless and guilty he is. To teach him this, to bring about in him penitence for sin and an earnest longing for deliverance from its guilt, its penalty and its power, to awaken an unshaken and abiding trust in the promise of deliverance, this was the purpose of the patient pedagogy of God. The whole Old Testament dispensation was the setting forth and carrying forward of this divine pedagogy.

Man was too sinful and rebellious to draw near to God. His guilt filled him full of fear and foreboding. He needed God but he could not approach Him. Wherewithal should he come?

God provided a sacrificial cult, a priesthood with sacrifices. The guiltless animal victim was to substitute the guilty sinner. The priest, with the victim's blood, was the mediator between the offended God and the offending sinner. With the sacrifice of expiation the priest brought to God the confessions and prayers of the people. And so the priest with his sacrifice and intercession was the daysman, the advocate, the mediator between the people and God. This was the old Testament Priesthood and its meaning. Through it God was teaching.

The Old Testament priest, with his offering, typified and foreshadowed Christ. Every expiatory sacrifice offered on an Old Testament altar was a finger pointing forward to the coming Christ and His sacrifice of Himself for the sin of the world. And in Him the whole sacrificial cult, with all its pedagogy, from Abel's sacrifice down through the old covenant centuries, was fulfilled:

"But Christ having come as a high Priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands, that is to say not of this creation; neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by His own Blood He entered in once into the Holy Place, having obtained an eternal redemption. For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of a heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal spirit offered Himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to worship the living God." Heb. 9: 11-14.

Through Christ the throne of Judgment has become a throne of Grace. The veil has been rent. The way to the Holy of Holies is open. We need neither sacrificing priest nor offering of atone-

ment. Every true believer in Christ is his own priest. For him the way to the throne of Grace is always open. Everywhere and everywhen he can come boldly and with full assurance:

"Having therefore boldness, brethren, to enter into the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, a new and living way, which He hath consecrated for us through the veil, that is to say, His flesh, and having a High Priest over the house of God; let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water." Heb. 10. 19-22.

Now every one who has this precious faith not only on his lips, but as a blessed experience in his heart, can joyfully sing:

"But O, what gentle terms,
What condescending ways,
Doth our Redeemer use
To teach His heavenly Grace!
Mine eyes with joy and wonder see
What forms of love He bears for me.

Arrayed in mortal flesh
He like an Angel stands;
And holds the promises

And pardons in His hands:
Commissioned from His Father's Throne
To make His Grace to mortals known.

For me and all mankind
The Lamb of God was slain;
My Lord His life resigned,
For every soul of man.
Loving to all, He none passed by,
He would not have one sinner die."

This is the doctrine. Is it not a precious teaching? Is it not the very foundation of inner peace and rest and joy? Paul and Luther and Wesley and the saints of the Ages experienced it. It is the basis of justification by faith. It made:

"The goodly fellowship of the Prophets,
"The Glorious company of the Apostles,
"The noble Army of martyrs,
"The Holy Church"

—insofar as she has been and is holy.

Woe to the Church whose pulpit ceases to preach, to teach, to insist on, to drive home without ceasing, the doctrine of the vicarious atonement which is the foundation of justification, which underlies the doctrine of the Priesthood of Believers! Woe to the Church-member who re-

mains ignorant of or gets away from these fundamentals. He is falling back into the Phariseeism of Christ's time, into the Romanism that made the Reformation necessary. He is throwing away the Christ of Paul, of Luther and of his Reformation. Even if he belongs to a Protestant Church he is a Romanist in heart and life. From this may the good Lord deliver us and our land!

II.

SOME IMPLICATIONS OF THIS DOCTRINE.

II.

Let us examine some implications of this Doctrine.*

In the Book of Revelation John prefaces his messages to the Churches with an ascription of praise "To Him that loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and His Father." In 1 Pet. 2: 5 & 9, we read: "Ye also are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ."

. . . . "Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood. . . . That ye show forth the praises of Him who hath called you out of darkness into His marvelous light."

"These New Testament priests are they which "were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." They have the annointing, "that teacheth them all things", that manifests itself in doing righteousness. They are henceforth to "destroy the body of sin" and to no longer "serve sin". They are to yield themselves "unto God as they that are alive from the dead and their members as in-

* See Problems and Possibilities, p. 72 ff.

struments of righteousness unto God", to "present their bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, as a reasonable service." They are "not to live unto themselves" nor "to die unto themselves" but "unto the Lord". Their bodies are to be "temples of the Holy Ghost", "members of Christ", and they are to "glorify God." They are to "mortify their members", "crucify the body with its affections and lusts." And so they are born into a holy office, have a holy annointing, and are to offer themselves as holy sacrifices.

They "offer the sacrifice of praise continually, that is the fruit of their lips, giving thanks unto His name." As priests they offer gifts. "To him that asketh they are to give." They are to give "good measure, shaken together, pressed down and running over." They are to give drink to the thirsty, feed the hungry, clothe the naked, shelter the homeless, minister to the sick, the needy, the sorrowing and suffering of every class, "distributing to the necessity of saints", "given to hospitality". In these manifold ways they offer their priestly sacrifices to their great High Priest, Christ Jesus. He assures them that "inasmuch as they have done it unto the least of these, they have done it unto Him." He recognizes the "cup of

cold water given in His name", even as Paul recognizes the gifts which the Philippians had sent for his support by the hand of Epaphroditus, "as an odor of sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well pleasing to God."

They make priestly intercession for each other. Paul desired this intercessory prayer for himself: "Brethren pray for us." "Pray for us that the Word of the Lord may have free course and be glorified". "Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints, and for me that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the Gospel". "Ye also helping together by prayer for us". He reminds the Colossians "that Epaphras who is one of you, a servant of Christ, saluteth you, always laboring fervently for you in prayers". When Peter was in prison "Prayer was made without ceasing of the Church unto God for him." And so we might go on to show that this intercessory prayer of believers "for the sick", for "the sin that is not unto death", "for enemies", and "for all men" was enjoined in practice. What a blessed function is this of the New Testament priest!

These New Testament priests were also to bestow priestly blessing. This they were to do, not only on their fellow-believers. They were "not to render evil for evil, or railing for railing, but contrariwise blessing." "To bless them that persecute, to bless and curse not."

Another of the functions even of the Old Testament priest was teaching. He was a "teaching priest" and the people were to "seek the law at his mouth." The "priest's lips were to drop knowledge."

The New Testament priest also is to teach. In the congregation at Corinth Paul enjoined: "Ye may all prophesy (i. e., teach,) that all may "learn." The Thessolonians were to "edify one another" "even as they also did." The Colossian Christians were to "let the Word of Christ dwell in them richly in all wisdom; teaching one another and admonishing one another" in the worship of their assemblies. They were even to admonish their ministers. To Archippus they were to say: "Take heed to the ministry which thou hast received in the Lord that thou fulfil it." Peter exhorts: "As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. If any man

speak, let him speak as the oracles of God, if any man minister (or serve) let him do it as of the ability which God giveth."

Luther, in his famous treaty on **"The Liberty of a Christian Man" says:** "Nor are we kings only and the freest of all men, but also priests forever, a dignity far higher than kingship, because by that priesthood we are worthy to appear before God, to pray for others and to teach one another mutually the things which are of God. For these are the duties of priests and they cannot possibly be permitted to any unbeliever. Christ has obtained for us this favor if we believe in Him, that, we are His brethren and co-heirs and fellow-kings with Him and venture with confidence, through the spirit of faith, to come into the presence of God and cry, 'Abba Father', and to pray for one another and to do all things which we see done and prefigured in the visible and corporeal office of the priesthood."

So Luther taught that every true believer is a spiritual priest, is as near to the great Head of the Church as any official priest can be, and is equally entitled to the promise and gift of the Holy Ghost. He may exercise priestly functions among his fellow men and ought to do what he can to

promote their well-being. This teaching of Luther was calculated to awaken a joyous consciousness and energy in the common Christian calling.

In his Tract that "A Christian Assembly or Congregation has the right and authority to judge all doctrines and to call teachers," Luther takes very strong ground on the rights and functions of spiritual priests. Koestlin in his "Theology of Luther" (Vol. II, p. 86) sums up this Document of Luther under these seven heads:

The Spiritual Priest (i. e., the believing layman) has a right

1. To teach the Word to others.
2. To baptize, in case of necessity.
3. To administer the Lord's Supper.
4. To exercise the Power of the Keys.
5. To offer spiritual sacrifices according to Romans 12: 1 & 1 Pet. 2: 5.
6. To make priestly intercession for others.
7. To pass judgment on doctrines in the light of Holy Scripture."

Much more might be quoted from Luther to show how he emphasized and appreciated this New Testament doctrine of The Priesthood of all Believers and how he wanted the Church to put it into practice.

That eminent Saint of God, Philip Jacob Spener made the study and practice of this doctrine the

second of his

"Pious Desires for the Lutheran Church."

His great aim in life was to reawaken and deepen a more earnest spiritual life in the Church of his love. He wanted a Pauline faith in all the members of the Church, a faith that worketh by love. He believed with Luther that one of the fatal faults of Rome was that the hierarchy gave to its official priests the monopoly of spiritual functions. Rome made it appear that the layman can come to God through the priest alone and receive blessings from God through the priests alone. The priest alone, as God's representative, could render spiritual service. The layman could not even study the Bible for himself, nor pray effectively, except as prescribed by the Church. Much less might he teach or admonish others, or in any way labor for the saving of their souls. The natural result in the Romish Church was a lifeless laity. True, there were exceptions. These were laymen who were better than their Church and rose above its official teaching.

This doctrine of proxy salvation, salvation through Church or priest is natural to the natural man and welcome to the human heart. It lulls the conscience to sleep. It relieves personal responsi-

bility. It is the stronghold of Romanism to-day. As the natural, unregenerate man, the old Adam, is a Romanist, this Romish error is ever ready to make itself a place among Protestant people. It was the bane of the State-Church life in the old world. It is nestled in all too many Lutheran congregations to-day. It is the opiate of many a Lutheran home. The unrenewed man is only too glad to rest in the idea that if he only accepts what the Church teaches, is faithful in the outward observances of its rites and ceremonies and pays what is demanded he need worry no further about his salvation. Personal righteousness, personal consecration and personal service are all left out. Surely, a repristination of the New Testament and Lutheran doctrine of the Spiritual Priesthood of all believers is sorely needed.

Luther and Spener were right in insisting that every Christian is under the most solemn obligation to study, meditate on and pray over the Word of God, to teach, admonish, reprove, warn and edify others at every opportunity, to pray for them and with them and to do everything in his power for their salvation. Yes, this forgotten doctrine brought home to the hearts and consciences of our people would be life from the dead.

III.

THE SAD NEGLECT OF THIS DOCTRINE.

III.

Let us look at **The Sad Neglect of This Doctrine.**

The Lutheran Church has the best trained, the most scripturally intelligent laity in the world. No other Church does so much for her children. None gives such careful and painstaking instruction in Bible and Catechism as does our dear Lutheran Church.*

The Lutheran Church ought to make the most use of her superior laity. She ought to get the greatest amount of good out of them. She ought to use them to the full extent of their ability. Her teaching on The Priesthood of Believers ought to make her appreciate the value and force of an intelligent and a consecrated laity. Her science, art, work and achievement in the Inner Mission ought to make her ministry know how to put the consecrated men and women to work for the Kingdom.

But our Church has not lived up to her privileges and opportunities. She has allowed the precious doctrine of the Spiritual Priesthood to go

* See Chapters 7-10, pp. 100-147 in Problems & Possibilities. Also Chapters 2 & 10 in The Lutheran Catechist.

into innocuous desuetude. The teaching of the doctrine has gone to sleep. She has the best laymen. She uses them the least. Not only has she allowed Churches that are less Evangelical, but more Evangelistic to make more use of their own more meagerly trained and less intelligent lay people, but she has lost to these other, more active Churches, scores, hundreds, thousands of her own best people. These people were attracted and drawn to the other Churches by that lay activity which they missed in their own. We do not justify these runaways. They should have used their zeal in insisting on and demanding a place for helpful activity in their own Church. They should have made their own Church, to which they owe so much, stronger instead of making her weaker by forsaking her.

The fact is others won them, others use them, others made themselves strong and useful through them. Our Church lost what others gained. We were weakened while they were strengthened. We failed to attain to that public recognition to which our history and doctrine entitle us. Our talents were not used. We failed to become the force for saving America that we might have and should have been. We suf-

fered and our land suffered through our own fault. Our influence in the making and moulding of America has not been what it might have been. Inferior churches won superior influence and power. Our talents were unused. They were taken away from us. They were used by others. It was our own fault.

IV.

NEW OPPORTUNITIES ARE OPEN.

IV.

New Opportunities Are Opening to Us.

No individual can keep up his bodily health and vigor by exercise and activity alone. He still needs the right kind of nourishment. Though man cannot live by bread alone, he cannot live without bread. He needs and may take exercise, but he will weaken and die without food.

No Church can live on activity alone. A Church may spend itself on helpful social service. Its members may consume themselves with zealous doing for others. In its fevered phrensy for serving, its own vitality may collapse. It may work itself to death. It may be so busy for others that it neglects its own nourishment. It starves itself.

To keep up the vitality of the spirit is fundamental. The spiritual life needs nourishment as really as does the life of the body. As the body must die without food so must the soul. A regiment of soldiers with the best of drill and exercise and patriotism and service and sacrifice cannot live without rations. And so a congregation or Church body might be aflame with altruism and service but if there is a lack of soul-food weakness and death will surely come. Activity may be

galvanized for a time. But it cannot be healthy and lasting. There may be spurts and spasms where food is lacking in quantity or in nutrition, but no Church can be an abiding power for God and for good where there is such artificiality and superficiality.

The spiritual life must have food. It must have nourishing, health-giving, life-bringing food. God alone can supply the satisfying soul food. God offers and gives this food in His Word. The Gospel is "the power of God unto Salvation to every one that believeth." "The words that I speak unto you they are spirit and they are life," says Jesus. "The entrance of Thy Word giveth light." It is "able to make wise unto Salvation." God's truth sanctifies. "Blessed are they that hear the Word of God and keep it." We all need to "desire the sincere milk of the Word that we may grow thereby." The word needs to "dwell in us richly." The daily cry of every believer should be: "I have desired the Words of thy mouth more than my necessary food." "More to be desired are they than gold. Yea than much fine gold, sweeter than honey and the honey-comb."

This blessed, spirit-bearing, living and life-giving Word must be our daily manna. We all

need to use it diligently in private. We need to have it preached to us publicly and from house to house. It needs to be preached in its truth and in its purity. It needs to be rightly divided. Its Law and its Gospel need to be properly distinguished and properly related. Its heavenly truth needs to be so clearly, so consistently, so completely set forth that "the wayfaring man, though a fool, need not err therein." In every passage the preacher needs to make the hearer see: first, what does this passage mean in itself and second, what does it mean for me? Like His blessed Master the good preacher must expound, make plain, illustrate and apply the truth to the people before him. He must bring the sinner to repentance, strengthen the believer in his faith, warn every one who is in danger, hold up the tottering, bring power to the weak and weary, comfort to the sad and sorrowing, hope to the discouraged, despondent and despairing. Every good sermon is life from the dead.

This only is good preaching. This is scriptural preaching. This is preaching the Word. This is the preaching that God bids. This is preaching a full Gospel. This is preaching a full Salvation. This is preaching sound doctrine. This is true Lutheran

preaching. This is bringing the message that our age needs. This is the message that will build up an intelligent, virile, stalwart, usable laity.

Now it is a sad fact that this message is not sounded forth as it should be in many churches. An expurgated Gospel, a misnamed Gospel, that carefully eliminates what is unwelcome to unregenerate ears and minds; a sugar-coated, counterfeit Gospel that is not the Gospel of God is proclaimed from thousands of pulpits to-day. To make the message palatable to the impenitent and unbelieving the doctrine and fact of sin are ignored if not denied. When the largest Protestant Church of America at its quadrennial Conference by resolution strikes from its original baptismal formula the Bible statement that "We are shapen in iniquity and conceived in sin" it certainly should make old fashioned, Bible Christians sit up and take notice. What did this conference mean? Can a conference change the teaching of God? Can it wipe out a fact? Are there not "Breakers Ahead", as one old saint of that Church shows in his book bearing that name?

Unrenewed human nature never did like the Bible doctrine of sin and guilt and condemnation. That old nature does not like the old Book that

sets forth so plainly and so startlingly the fact and doctrine of sin. Therefore the authority of the Book must be abrogated. The age-old belief of the inspiration of the Bible must be gotten rid of. People don't like the humiliations of the Book. Therefore the Book must be discredited. And so a pulpit whose aim is popularity preaches that the Bible is a human product, its teachings are the judgments of fallible men. They are subject to our critical examination and judgment. We know more than those ancient writers could know. There is nothing supernatural, nothing binding in what they wrote. We are not bound to believe as they did. Therefore, in this enlightened age, we repudiate sin. We need no Saviour from sin. Conduct and character must save. We need not and do not believe in the virgin-birth of a God-man. These are ancient, outgrown beliefs. Since there is no guilt-entailing sin, there can be no need of a substitutionary or vicarious atonement. Jesus, the son of Joseph and Mary, as Dr. VanDyke calls Him in his **"Out of Doors In The Holy Land,"** was a beautiful character who showed us by his example and teaching how we ought to live and how we ought to die and that is all that we need Him for. We need no Holy Spirit.

The belief in one is another hoary superstition. We need no spiritual renewal, no regeneration or conversion, no penitence, faith, or justification. These outworn beliefs we cast into the discard. Every man must be his own prophet, as Emerson taught. Let every man write his own scripture, be his own Saviour, make his own heaven. This is the new Gospel for the old Adam. He likes it. And yet it leaves him uneasy. Like the honest Ohio farmer once said: "I don't believe the Bible and its old doctrines but I would give my best yoke of oxen if I could be sure that they were not true."

Ah, there's the rub! Who will demonstrate that they are not true? If not true, why and whence their wonderful appeal, their wonderful results, their transforming effects, their uplift toward God and heaven?

And yet foolish preachers and writers will spend their strength in persuading men to throw away these heavenly treasures and so rob them of that proven panacea, the only cure for the ills and woes the discontent and restlessness, the want and hunger of the soul. Let them preach. Let them argue. Let them write. Let them go on in their wild, vain effort to make men believe that they have

no voices within while they all the time hear those voices. Let them tell men that they have no souls that need salvation, that there is no God and no hereafter. But while men are listening they are feeling the inner pull and the soul is crying for salvation. God is appealing, the appeal is felt, the fears and forebodings are there. Man cannot deny himself.

And so the preachers of another Gospel that is not the Gospel, the preachers of rationalism, of liberalism, of modernism, sooner or later preach their churches empty. They have no satisfying, no saving message. It is vanity and vexation and wind.

We are sorry for these churches in which unbelief and hopelessness are permitted to be preached. We are sorry for these deluded dupes. They get nothing and so they quit going. Why should they go? Does not the Sunday paper offer better stuff, more variety, more entertainment, with less expenditure of effort and money?

Are not the results apparent? May they not be read and known of all? Why are so many churches eking out a precarious existence, combining, merging or dying? In the decade before the last census, why did 282 country churches die

in Maine, 500 in Ohio and 1700 in Illinois.* Why the alarming statistics of the fatal falling off of Sunday School attendance? The root cause is one. It is unbelief. It is substituting man's wisdom for the wisdom of God, putting human speculation into the place of God's truth. God said of old what is true to-day: "My people have committed two evils; they have forsaken Me, the fountain of living waters, and have hewn themselves out cisterns, broken cisterns that can hold no water."

Paul in portraying the downward trend of his day is describing ours: "Because when they knew God they glorified Him not as God neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise they became fools."

It is indeed matter for deep gratitude to God that He has graciously guarded our Lutheran pulpits and churches against these inroads of modern, popular unbelief. Our professor's chairs and our pulpits still teach the old Reformation doctrines. Our people, as a class, are tainted less than others in matters of faith. And so the sad loss of others should be our gain. Their fall should be

* See The Lutheran Church in the Country, Chapters 8 & 9, pp. 71-88.

our rising. Good people in the liberal churches are hungry. They are not fed. They go for bread; they get a stone. Our own pulpits are supposed to preach the good, old, God-given message delineated above.

Now if they will always and everywhere preach it out of a heart that has experienced its power, its blessing, its peace: out of a heart that is warm with love to Christ, a heart that is full of sympathy and compassion for those who know it not, a heart that yearns to bring it into such empty, guilty hearts and lives, a heart that makes the messenger ready to serve, to sacrifice, to suffer that others may know the preciousness of the message, then our pulpit will draw, our churches will fill. Their influence will be felt and spread. The community will know and feel it. The Priesthood of believes will function, while sinners will be converted and saints will be sanctified.*

* Read also: Problems & Possibilities, pp. 86-96.

V

THE SPIRITUAL PRIESTHOOD ACTUALIZED IN THE CHURCH.

V.

The Spiritual Priesthood Actualized in the Church.

Then would the pastor use his lay men and women. He would show them and lead them into every form of priestly activity. With and through his laymen he would endeavor to make his parish carry out Wichern's idea of a living, active Church. Wichern says:

"The Gospel must again be preached from the housetops. It must be freely offered and magnified in the market-places and on the streets, if the masses can not be reached in any other way; and this must be done in a fresh, vigorous and stimulating way, so that all may again hear the preached Word and that what has become to thousands something antiquated and useless, may again have a chance to become their new and precious possession. Whatever else may be done to reach the masses, there are thousands to whom no other way is open, because market-place and street are their habitat.... Our Church must have its itinerant and street preachers, colporteurs, and the printed Word should precede and follow or accompany these, so that the Word may become effective in conversation and in printed form.

The task of such preachers would be to find and win back into the ranks of the living members of the organized congregations those who have fallen away. (As well as those who have never had any connection with any Church, or have been influenced and drawn away by some unevangelical or anti-Christian cult.) The task of these (lay-workers) would be to stand as it were before the Church doors and give the invitation to enter; to proclaim the saving Gospel with fervent love to the neglected masses, to awaken the desire for renewed fellowship with the Communion of Saints, in whom Christ dwells only to bless."

"Let it not be forgotten that the preaching of the divine Word is the prime requisite for the maintenance of the Church's life. Above all must the doctrine of the Universal Priesthood of Believers be emphasized so that each one may come to realize that it is his duty to labor for his Master and his Master's Kingdom wherever God has placed him and given him the opportunity.

Thus must the Church become a blessing-dispensing congregation of priests to every one, witnessing the life that God gives and showing forth the praises of Him who hath called him out of darkness into His marvelous light. As such the

Priesthood of Believers consecrates itself to missionary labors, including those of the Inner Mission. Each believing priest, man or woman, in his house, at his work and calling, alongside of his weekday comrade will labor for ingathering into God's Kingdom and stirring up to priestly duty those that are in."

This is Wichern's old message. It is timely now. It is needed to-day. It is the crucial want of our Church. Would that every Lutheran Church Body, every Synod, Conference and pastoral association would earnestly and prayerfully discuss it. Would that every minister could be made to see the need and his own responsibility in view of the need. Would that every preacher could catch the vision of Wichern. Then would he give himself no rest, then would he cry constantly and mightily to God for help to make his people catch the vision and its inspiration. Then would he put new heart, new life, new power into his still Scriptural sermons. He would not change one iota of the good, old Gospel doctrine. He would transform the doctrine into experience, into life, into practice. He would hold the old faith, but it would work. It would work by love. It would work in all his people. All would become startlingly conscious that while

they were redeemed at an infinite cost, they were redeemed to serve.

The Sunday School teachers would catch the preachers' vision and get a will to work. They would put personal application into their lessons. Their pupils would learn that they are members of this wonderful priesthood. They would be made to see the beauty and the privilege of service. They would want to help make the world better and happier. They would learn to count it all joy to give their best that others might be blest.

The Catechetical class would take on new life and interest. There would be no lessening of instruction and explanation in Bible doctrine. But every lesson would have its personal appeal and application. It would be made to mean something suitable to the thinking, feeling and purposing of the boys and girls present.

Both Sunday School teacher and Catechist should make their pupils so know the doctrine of the Priesthood of Believers that the pupils would be able to state it in their own words. Teachers and Catechists should make it so clear, so practical and so attractive that the pupils would want and ask for opportunities to put the blessed teaching into practice.

Next to the home, here in Sunday School and in catechetical class are the places to enlist and train members, active, working, helpful members of the spiritual Priesthood.

The true pastor will make his women understand that they are not rendering their best and highest service in raising money by doubtful, dangerous and often unlawful methods. These good women want to do. They want to serve. They believe that they are rendering the best service in their power.

The right kind of a pastor will make clear to them the beauty and blessedness of the Christlike and scriptural way of doing good as a spiritual priest. Not by spending her time, energy and money in getting up fairs, festivals, bazaars and suppers, whose tendency is to bring an irreverent, a worldly, a selfish, a dangerous spirit into the Church of Christ does a woman render her best service. These worldly, commercial and doubtful doings are not the functions of the Priesthood of Believers. The pastor must lead his women to see and appreciate the more excellent way.

The women of the Ladies' Aid and Missionary Society will thus come to realize that they have a holy mission. Each woman will make the happy

discovery that she is in the world, in the family, in her group, in the Church for a purpose. She is a spiritual priest, she has all the privileges and all the responsibilities of a New Testament priest. And the more clearly she realizes the meaning and intent of this the larger and happier will be her service. She will do and give and serve and help not because she must but because she wants to. She will be constrained not by law, but by love. "The love of Christ constraineth us." Not driven, but drawn by such constraint, the woman's society will be a power for good in the congregation, in the neighborhood, in all the general benevolences of the Church at home and abroad. From such a society there will be candidates for the Deaconess calling. Such women will find and win candidates for the ministry of the Word. Those who cannot take upon themselves the ministry of mercy as a life calling, will be ungarbed deaconesses. Succorers of many, they will befriend the friendless, beneighbor the strangers and the lonely, safeguard the endangered, raise up the fallen and in general minister to the lapsed and lost in body and in soul. All this and much more under the leadership of a pastor who has caught the spirit and vision of Wichern.

VI.

THE BROTHERHOOD.

VI.

THE LOCAL BROTHERHOOD.

Such a pastor will have a local brotherhood. He will make a special study of the brotherhood movement. He will want to know its basic principles, its aims and purposes, as well as its management and methods. He will be the power behind the throne. He will instruct, direct, lead and inspire. He will see that the local group is rightly related to the synodical group.

The brotherhood movement is young in our Church. As the doctrine of the priesthood of believers had been forgotten, neglected and left to lie dormant, the using of the laymen was not thought of. The work was left to the women. The men were standing at "parade rest." They filled their places in the pews—when they came. They were filled and went home. What wonder that there were three million more women than men in the churches of America even before the war.

Alert and farseeing men became awake to the situation. They saw the danger of losing manpower. The Church began to realize her need of men. She began to see that she needs the help, the service of her laymen. Progressive pastors

led the way in organizing local brotherhoods. These were gradually organized into synodical and general groups. The largest and most efficient is the Lutheran Brotherhood of America, or L. B. A. This one takes in the local brotherhoods of every synod in the National Lutheran Council. It was born in and of the war emergency. It's splendid activities are now to be used to aid and further all Church activities. We are hoping that the way may be opened speedily for the federation and cooperation of all other Lutheran brotherhoods.

The brotherhood is of the Church, in the Church and for the Church. The local organization is a committee of the congregation, working in harmony with its aims and purposes. It is organized to promote and work for the welfare of the congregation and of the whole Church. It is an organization for service. It needs and wants the guidance and leadership of the pastor. Together with him it plans for work and does the work. It lifts many a secular burden from his shoulder. It studies the priciples and problems of the Church. It makes for intelligent laymen. It promotes Church loyalty. It stands for a clean, honest, unselfish and helpful manhood. It believes

that the Church of Jesus Christ is God's agency for saving and sanctifying souls, for making the world a better place to live in and for making life cleaner, richer and happier in every sphere. Surely every loyal member of such a brotherhood is in the priesthood of believers. As a believing priest he will find abundant room for service

The brotherhood can district the field and divide the work of going after each lapsed and endangered Church member. Very often a layman's interest, admonition and invitation will do more than a pastor's. The layman can talk up his Church, her pastor, her uplift and helpfulness, to the men with whom he rubs elbows, with whom he comes in comradely contact, with whom he walks and rides and works and talks. If he will learn the blessedness of using such opportunities his life will grow richer day by day. As opportunity offers he will call for an acquaintance or a stranger on Sunday and accompany him to Church.

The brotherhood will promote neighborly sociability and companionship. It will arrange for and encourage social neighborhood meetings. If there is no convenient and available school house or public hall, it will work for a parish house or a conveniently equipped basement. All this and

always in harmony with the pastor.*

The Brotherhood will be a part of an Adult Bible Class. Through its canvass and companionship it will be constantly recruiting the class. The brotherhood and Bible-class movement should always work together. They should strengthen one another. Thus working together they should make our Church again a Bible-study Church. Surely the Church that gave the open Bible back to the world should always have the largest and best Bible classes. The reviving and re-utilizing of the dormant doctrines of the New Testament priesthood will bring about this blessed movement.

After the same manner the brotherhood will gather and encourage members for the pastor's Adult Catechetical Class. All those outsiders who have never been catechised or confirmed ought to be instructed, privately at home, or in a class in the Church. Sanctified common sense will teach the pastor that these grown ups cannot be dealt with as children. He will not expect them to memorize a catechism. They have neither time, talent nor taste for memory work. The pastor

* Send to "Womens Literature Hdqs.," 805 Drexel Bldg., Phila., Pa., for the author's tract on "Are Our Churches reaching and helping the Stranger?" Price 3 cents.

will be thankful if he can get such people to have an intelligent understanding of the most essential teachings of sin, repentance, faith, justification, grace and means of grace. Such people will be glad to read a plain, practical book that will help them.* With a good, live brotherhood to help him the zealous pastor should get great good out of such classes. They are among the most fruitful evangelistic agencies of our Church.

The good brotherhood will always exert a helpful, a stimulating and an encouraging influence on the Luther League. By their own frequent or, better still, regular attendance, by enlisting the interest of others, by helping to win new members, by assistance in making the meetings interesting, by promoting outings and social indoor gatherings and in many other ways the brotherhood can make the Luther League an efficient factor for good in the Church.

All that we said above of the Sunday School and catechical class applies to the Luther League. Here are the incipient and growing lay-priests, the future workers and pillars of the Church. Let the pastor win the confidence of every Luther

* It was partly to help pastors reach and assist such people that the Author of this wrote "The Way of Salvation In The Lutheran Church." The revised edition is in its 35th 1000.

Leaguer. Let him inspire, lead and direct all the services and activities of his league. Here are the church's forces and helpers in the making.*

The Church finances are often a heavy cross to the pastor, a temptation to resort to worldly schemes of making money and a discouragement to the whole Church. Happy is the pastor who has a good brotherhood. Its members will always conduct a thorough, a successful every member canvass. They will be ready to get under every heavy load that ought to be carried. They will be ready for every special drive. They will find their chief joy in making their Church a generous Church, well reported for good works in its Synod. In this also will the brothers be exercising the blessed functions of New Testament priests.

It goes without saying that in such a Church the brotherhood and the Ladies' Society, the Luther League and Sunday School will all work together in looking after and relieving the poor, the needy, the lonely, the sorrowing, the sick and suffering of the congregation and of the neighborhood who need comfort and help. Such Inner Mission work is the joy of the priesthood of be-

* See "Problems & Possibilities," pp. 95, 96, 107-109.

lievers. It is true, Christian, social service. It makes glad the City of God, the holy place of the Tabernacles of the Most High. It brings beauty, power and glory to the Church. It clothes her with the beautiful garments of the Bride of Christ. It approaches more and more to being a glorious Church having neither spot nor wrinkle nor any such thing.

Our dear Church has much whereof to glory. She is the Church of the pure doctrine. This gives her that satisfying and saving message. This ought to make her messengers always offer that heavenly message in the most attractive and in the most appealing form. Her sermons ought to thrill, to move, to melt, to draw, to transform mind, heart and life.

Now let our dear Church everywhere bring back to its rightful place, a rightful comprehension, apprehension and utilizing of the Priesthood of Believers and she will again rise and shine. She will shine with the glory of the transfigured Christ who is her foundation, her hope, her all in all. She will go forth as the morning, bright as the sun, clear as the moon and terrible as an Army with banners.

She will come into her own.

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